BUDGET

New Century. **Bold Plans.**

2000

Presented by Stockwell Day, Provincial Treasurer,
in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta
on Thursday, February 24, 2000

Government of Alberta
Business Plan 2000-03

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

THE VISION . . .

"A vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children."

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New Century - Bold Plan

BEGINNING A NEW CENTURY

It's a new century ... a new beginning. With that comes a natural tendency to look back and assess the achievements of the past, but also to look ahead, to anticipate trends, and set bold new plans for the future.

Today, Alberta stands at the crossroads. We're leaving behind a century that saw the birth of the province, the hard work and determination of our early pioneers, the development of one of Canada's strongest agricultural industries, the discovery of oil and the extraction of oil from the tar sands, the subsequent diversification of our economic base, building leading edge education and health systems, and welcoming thousands of people from across Canada and around the world. It's been an exciting century for Alberta.

Now we look ahead to a new century ... a century of untold promise.

It's time to shift our focus to the future. While there is much to celebrate about Alberta's first century, there are challenges ahead and new opportunities to address. Meeting those challenges will demand the bold approach Albertans are known for across Canada.

Alberta is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the opportunities a new century brings. From our early pioneers, we learned that sheer determination and hard work are key to success. In business and industry, we learned that innovation and new ideas bring a solid competitive advantage. In health, education and other key areas of the public sector, we learned that people make the difference – highly skilled and committed teachers, educators, doctors, nurses, health providers and dedicated public servants.

Through some difficult financial times, we learned that making tough decisions, spending only what you can afford, and paying down debt is the best long term strategy. From Albertans, we learned the importance of being bold, not settling for the status quo, tackling issues head on, and caring for each other, especially those who need our help.

With these lessons in mind, it's time to set bold new plans for the future. It's time to close one chapter in the history books and open the next.

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BOLD NEW PLANS

As we begin a new century, Alberta faces a number of challenges.

- A tough, competitive global economy
- Addressing the increasing importance of knowledge and innovation
- Continuing pressures on the health system and the need to try new approaches
- Creating an environment for Alberta's children to get an excellent start in life in safe, happy and healthy families and communities
- Building opportunities for young people to learn, expand their skills and build their futures here in Alberta

To address those challenges, the government will put bold new plans in place, plans that are based on clear principles.

- Fiscal responsibility – managing the province's resources wisely, paying down debt and keeping taxes low
- Innovation – trying new ideas, seeking new solutions, and making changes that benefit the province and Albertans
- Equity – ensuring fairness for all Albertans and respect for diversity of culture, age, and gender
- Balance – balancing development and sustainability, saving and spending

These principles of fiscal responsibility, innovation, equity, and balance are the foundation of the business plan and are addressed in both parts of the plan. Together, the first part, a series of goals and strategies undertaken by individual ministries and the second, a collection of four cross-government initiatives represent the combined three-year plan of the Alberta government.

The cross-government initiatives engage people from various ministries in finding innovative, effective and productive ways of meeting people's needs. This cooperative approach recognizes the reality that many issues are not isolated to a single ministry. The initiatives include:

1. the Economic Development Strategy
2. the Aboriginal Policy Initiative
3. the Alberta Corporate Service Centre Initiative
4. the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy

Overall, the business plan will focus this government's efforts for the next three years in five critical areas:

- agriculture
- our economy
- education
- taxes
- health care

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ADDRESSING A CHANGING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Farming has been at the heart of Alberta's economy for the past century and we need concerted efforts to preserve that tradition for tomorrow's generation of farmers. Today's agricultural industry is going through significant changes and difficult times. Some family farms are finding it difficult to survive. Low world commodity prices, rising costs of production and unfavourable trade practices in other countries are putting pressure on the agricultural industry in Alberta and all prairie provinces. Highly competitive markets mean agricultural producers continually need to search for new, value-added products and new marketplaces to sell their goods.

There are no easy solutions. As a critical step, an Agriculture Summit will be held in the spring of 2000. That Summit will lay the groundwork for future actions to preserve Alberta's farm economy. A comprehensive review of the crop insurance program will be undertaken, innovative business opportunities will be supported, and efforts to open up new markets for value-added products will be expanded.

The provincial government will also work with the federal government to advance the interests of Alberta's agricultural producers in improved trade rules and access to markets.

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IMPLEMENTING A NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In positioning the province for continued prosperity, Alberta faces a fiercely competitive, global marketplace. People, business and investment are highly mobile and can move quickly to wherever they get the best advantage or return on their investment. Knowledge and innovation are replacing assembly line factories and manual labour as the critical components of thriving economies around the world.

To address those challenges, government will move forward on a new economic development strategy. *Get Ready Alberta* is designed to do just that – to get the province and the people ready for a very different economy, the economy of the future.

The new strategy will focus the province's efforts in four key areas:

- **Unleashing innovation** – making Alberta a world leader in innovation, research, development and commercialization of new ideas. A new Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research is a key step in attracting research and development to the province.

- **Leading in learning** – ensuring that all Albertans have the opportunities to learn, adapt and develop new knowledge and new skills. Expanded access to high speed Internet connections will give people access to learning any time, anywhere.

- **Competing in a global marketplace** – taking steps so that Alberta is internationally recognized as a good place to invest and do business and Alberta businesses compete and succeed in a global marketplace. Steps will be taken to implement a new International Strategy.

- **Making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit** – ensuring that Albertans enjoy an unmatched quality of life in a province that's recognized as the best place to live, work and visit. Alberta's tourism industry will be expanded, steps will be taken to protect and sustain Alberta's environment, and the diversity and excitement of Alberta's culture, arts, sports, festivals and volunteer spirit will be promoted.

A key target of the new strategy is to create a climate that will see 295,000 new jobs created in the province by December 2005.

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PROVIDING EXCELLENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is of utmost importance that Alberta's children and youth have opportunities to learn, achieve and take their place in a highly competitive global marketplace.

This business plan will help pre-school children get a healthy start in life as we follow through on the recommendations of the Children's Forum and the Premier's Task Force on Children at Risk.

Once they start school, our aim is to ensure that children receive the best education in Canada. At the basic education level, work will focus on addressing class size and services for special needs students. A review of fundraising and school fees will be undertaken. The new Alberta Initiative for School Improvement will support projects designed to improve student learning. A new information and communications technology program will be introduced.

At the post-secondary level, opportunities for students will be increased by supporting additional places in colleges, universities and technical institutes and expanding apprenticeship opportunities. Additional funding will be provided to ensure that students have the financial support they need to complete their education. That will include increased funding for student awards, extended eligibility for an interest relief program, and a new scholarship for second year post-secondary students.

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MAINTAINING ALBERTA'S TAX ADVANTAGE

Albertans pride themselves on paying the lowest taxes in Canada. But it is critical that we maintain this advantage and position Alberta to compete not only with other provinces but also with our competitors in the United States and around the world.

The provincial government has taken important steps in the past few years to lower taxes. Ultimately, tax dollars belong not to government but to the people who pay them. Those dollars are entrusted to government to support programs Albertans value.

As part of this business plan, government will move forward with plans to reform the personal income tax system, introducing a new single rate tax on income and providing a financial benefit to Alberta families. In January this year, we removed the surtax. That will be followed by comprehensive legislation introducing a new tax system – a system that will result in 132,000 low income Albertans paying no provincial income tax whatsoever.

Plans will proceed for reducing education property tax rates and a longer term review and consultation on education property taxes will be completed. In addition, business taxes in the province will be reviewed by the Alberta Business Tax Review Committee to see how Alberta's taxes stack up against the competition and to recommend changes.

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SUSTAINING ALBERTA'S HEALTH SYSTEM

Health care is the number one concern of Albertans and a major issue facing all Canadians.

Alberta's population is growing and aging. New technologies, treatments and medications add to the cost of maintaining the health system. Today, one out of every three dollars the provincial government spends goes to health care. We have a good health care system. But simply doing more of the same will not be sufficient to address the mounting pressures of today or sustain the system for future generations of Albertans.

In this business plan, government commits to a comprehensive six-point plan.

1. **Improve access to publicly funded health services**

   Government will continue to ensure that the health system is properly funded. Over the next three years, spending on health will continue to increase. The additional money will be used to hire more nurses and other health providers, to recruit more doctors and increase residency positions in medical schools, to reduce waiting lists for heart surgery, joint replacements, cancer treatment and neurosurgery, and to

open more long term care beds.

2. **Improve management of the health system**

   A new Health Services Utilization Commission will monitor and assess the health system's performance and recommend improvements.

3. **Improve the quality of health services**

   Building on a number of pilot projects across the province, steps will be taken to expand primary care. These new approaches will improve access to doctors, reduce pressures on hospital emergency wards, and provide community-based clinics with access to teams of health professionals and others who can help meet people's needs. Greater partnership and teamwork among health professionals will be encouraged and discussions will begin this year on ways of using nurse practitioners in new and creative ways.

4. **Emphasize promotion of good health and prevention of illness and injury**

   A new immunization plan and province-wide screening programs for breast cancer, cervical cancer and inherited disorders of metabolism in newborns will be critical components of new plans to promote good health.

5. **Foster new ideas**

   Continuing innovation is critical to the future of Alberta's health system. A new Premier's Advisory Council on Health will bring forward the best new ideas and approaches from across Canada and around the world on how we can maintain our public health system.

6. **Protect public health care**

   Legislation will be introduced to protect Alberta's publicly funded health system. Clear rules will be put in place for contracting out certain surgeries that require overnight stays.

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LOOKING AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE

Looking ahead, Alberta is well poised to continue our tradition of hard work, drive and determination. We have every reason to look forward to the future – to a new century – with the confidence that we will tackle whatever challenges come our way and succeed. The business plans of ministries, which are also contained in this volume, detail the actions government will take to meet these challenges.

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GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Government's actions are focused on three core businesses: People, Prosperity and Preservation. Goals have been set for each of the core businesses. The following section outlines those goals and provides the key strategies that will be used to achieve each goal. More information about strategies and action plans is included in the business plans of individual ministries.

Notes: Bolded, italicized strategies denote a key cross-government initiative which are detailed in the "Cross-Government Initiatives" section which follows.

Ministry Key:

AEDA Alberta Economic Development Authority

AFRD Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

CD Community Development

CS Children's Services

ED Economic Development

ENV Environment

GAMING Gaming Council

GS Government Services

HRE Human Resources and Employment

HW Health and Wellness

IIR International and Intergovernmental Relations

INFRA Infrastructure

IS Innovation and Science

JUS Justice and Attorney General

LEARN Learning

MA Municipal Affairs

NADC Northern Alberta Development

PAB Public Affairs Bureau

PAO Personnel Administration Office

RD Resource Development

TREAS Treasury

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PEOPLE . . .

Goals 1 to 5 are people goals, focusing on helping people to be self-reliant, capable and caring through:

- a healthy society and accessible health care
- basic support and protection for those in need
- lifelong learning
- excellent schools, colleges, universities and training institutes
- supportive families and compassionate communities

Goal 1: ALBERTANS WILL BE

HEALTHY	
• ensure Albertans get the care they need through accessible high quality health services	HW
• prepare for future health needs through ongoing innovation, integration and coordination in health service delivery	HW
• provide more services to people where they need them – in their communities and in their homes	HW
• improve accountability and results in the health care system through clear expectations and better information	HW
• focus on long-term health gains through increased emphasis on programs to prevent illness and injury, and protect and promote good health, as well as healthy active lifestyles	CD, ENV, HRE, HW, PAO

GOAL 2: OUR CHILDREN WILL BE WELL CARED FOR, SAFE, SUCCESSFUL AT LEARNING AND HEALTHY	
• continue implementation of the Alberta Children's Initiative with an emphasis on cross-government initiatives to improve supports and resources to children	CD, CS, HRE, HW, LEARN, IIR, JUS
• support Child and Family Services Authorities in the delivery of community-based, integrated services to children and families, with an emphasis on early intervention and on meeting the needs of Aboriginal children	CD, CS, HW, LEARN, IIR, JUS
• provide integrated health and related support services in schools to students with special health needs	CS, HW, LEARN

• continue to promote the Alberta Child Health Benefit which provides low-income families with the prescription drugs, dental, optical, and ambulance services that their children require	HRE
• introduce health strategies to address priority health issues, including low birth weight babies	CS, HW

GOAL 3: ALBERTA STUDENTS WILL EXCEL	
• enhance school-readiness opportunities for children from birth to three years of age	LEARN
• build a solid foundation for learning by focusing on early grades	LEARN
• improve student learning by implementing the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement with partners	LEARN
• meet diverse learner needs by expanding the variety of learning opportunities	LEARN
• ensure that students' financial needs are not a barrier to learning	LEARN
• expand opportunities for youth to develop career preparation and employability skills	HRE, LEARN
• improve assessment of learner achievement as well as other results from Alberta's learning system	LEARN

GOAL 4: ALBERTANS WILL BE INDEPENDENT	
• improve transitions for youth among school, further learning and work	HRE, LEARN

• develop additional cross-government strategies through the People and Prosperity Initiative that help Albertans contribute to and share in Alberta's economic prosperity	HRE, ED, LEARN, all ministries
• ensure up-to-date information is available to young people on labour market needs, career preparation and opportunities for further learning	HRE, LEARN
• continue efforts to get social assistance clients into the workforce by improving training programs and providing appropriate financial and health benefits	HRE

GOAL 5: ALBERTANS UNABLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR BASIC NEEDS WILL RECEIVE HELP	
• redesign benefits to assist better those Albertans who are unable to provide for their basic needs and require financial assistance	HRE
• support the work of the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Board in meeting the needs of adults with developmental disabilities	HW
• provide financial assistance to lower-income seniors through the *Alberta Seniors Benefit* and *Special Needs Assistance for Seniors* programs	CD
• facilitate the provision of appropriate housing for Albertans most in need	CD
• conduct a review of the impact of an aging population and the effects on provincial programs and services	CD, HW
• develop a strategy on homelessness in conjunction with municipal governments, local authorities, community groups and the private sector	CD, HRE, HW

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PROSPERITY . . .

Goals 6 to 13 focus on promoting prosperity for Alberta through:

- a dynamic environment for growth in business, industry and jobs
- a highly skilled and productive workforce
- open markets in Canada and internationally for trade and investment
- new ideas, innovation and research
- an open and accountable government that lives within its means
- an efficient system of roads, highways, utilities and public spaces

GOAL 6: ALBERTA WILL HAVE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY	
• continue to promote the Alberta Advantage	all ministries
• ***Implement the new Economic Development Strategy to enable Albertans to meet future economic challenges***	ED, IS, LEARN, all ministries
• encourage investment and economic activity by maintaining a globally competitive tax regime	AEDA, ED, IS, TREAS
• reward personal initiative by cutting taxes and implementing Alberta's new personal income tax system on January 1, 2001	TREAS
• undertake a business tax review to ensure business taxes are competitive	TREAS
• work with industry to attract domestic and international investment	AEDA, AFRD, ED, IIR, IS
• support the expansion of Alberta's tourism industry and promotion of Alberta as a world-renowned tourism destination	AEDA, CD, ED

• encourage communities to work with partners to create and implement viable local and regional economic development plans	AEDA, AFRD, ED, ENV, IIR, MA, NADC
• improve the ability of start-up and early stage companies to access the capital they need to get their businesses up and running	AEDA, AFRD, ED, IS
• remove barriers to national and international trade and investment so Alberta businesses can compete in new markets	AFRD, ED, IIR

GOAL 7: OUR WORKFORCE WILL BE SKILLED AND PRODUCTIVE	
• improve Albertans' ability to enter the workforce and keep pace with changing skill needs	AEDA, AFRD, ED, HRE, LEARN, PAO
• establish and maintain a balanced long-term program of science and engineering research through the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research (AHFSER)	IS
• remove barriers that prevent people from moving easily from job to job or place to place in order to work	AEDA, ED, HRE, IIR, LEARN, NADC, PAO
• ***maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of human resource management in the Alberta Public Service through continued implementation of the Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy***	PAO, all ministries
• improve the knowledge and skills of Alberta youth, particularly as they relate to employability and the transitions between learning and work	AFRD, CD, HRE, LEARN
• strengthen connections between school and workplace learning	LEARN

• expand training opportunities in information technology, communications and nursing	LEARN

GOAL 8: ALBERTA BUSINESSES WILL BE INCREASINGLY INNOVATIVE	
• expand Alberta's focus on research, knowledge and technology that results in viable commercial products, processes and services	AFRD, ED, IS, RD
• encourage the innovative application of new technologies by resource-based industries to sustain future competitiveness and resource bases	AEDA, AFRD, ED, RD
• encourage the development of private sector laboratories for food production and processing	AFRD, ED, IS

GOAL 9: ALBERTA'S VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES WILL LEAD ECONOMIC GROWTH	
• use technology in targeted sectors to expand Alberta's value-added industries	AEDA, AFRD, ED, IS, RD
• expand Alberta's economy by defining and taking action on key science and technology priorities	ED, IS, RD
• expand in-Alberta opportunities for secondary processing of renewable and non-renewable resources	AEDA, AFRD, ED, RD
• facilitate the growth of value-added industries, especially in the agri-food, energy and forestry sectors	AFRD, ED, IIR, IS, NADC, RD

GOAL 10: ALBERTA WILL HAVE	

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE	
• implement initiatives to ensure effective and innovative capital planning and funding of government supported infrastructure through the Capital Planning Initiative	INFRA, TREAS, all ministries
• promote cooperative initiatives among business and industry, government and municipalities to address the need for infrastructure development	AEDA, CD, ED, GAMING, INFRA, MA, NADC
• facilitate trade by improving key highway routes including the North-South Trade Corridor	INFRA
• work with local governments to strengthen rural and urban transportation partnerships and ensure that Alberta has a safe and efficient system of roads	INFRA, MA
• complete restructuring of Alberta's electric industry and manage the transition to a deregulated market	RD
• protect Alberta's multi-billion dollar investment in physical infrastructure for educational institutions, health care, seniors' housing, irrigation, water management and other government programs through appropriate maintenance and upgrading	AFRD, CD, ENV, HW, LEARN, INFRA, MA
• develop a high speed, provincial technology network that will ensure high speed Internet and wide-area network availablility so that all Albertans can access government services	GS, HW, IS, all ministries
• develop and implement advanced telecommunications, infrastructure management, and information management systems for improved communications and service delivery	CD, GS, HW, INFRA, IS, LEARN, TREAS

GOAL 11: ALBERTA WILL HAVE A	

FINANCIALLY STABLE, OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT	
• continue to implement current fiscal policies of balancing the budget, orderly paydown of debt, low taxes, targeted spending and capital planning	TREAS
• eliminate unnecessary regulations	all ministries
• provide regular reports to Albertans on government goals, as well as financial and non-financial performance results	all ministries
• provide efficient management of government resources and communications	INFRA, IS, PAO, TREAS
• ***improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of Alberta government administrative services by implementing the Alberta Corporate Services Centre initiative***	all ministries
• improve Albertans' access to government information and services through the "one window access to services" project	GS, IS, all ministries
• meet Albertans' requested needs for more information on government programs and services, and make it easier for them to give their feedback and opinions	all ministries

GOAL 12: ALBERTA WILL HAVE A FAIR AND SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT	
• promote high standards in the workplace for labour relations and workplace health and safety	HRE, PAO
• support community organizations undertaking educational initiatives to promote fairness and access, and increase understanding of the growing diversity in	CD

Alberta society	

GOAL 13: ALBERTA BUSINESSES WILL INCREASE EXPORTS	
• implement Alberta's International Marketing Strategy to focus trade and investment efforts in targeted regions and industries	AFRD, ED, IIR, IS, LEARN, RD
• improve Alberta's ability to compete and do business in global markets by expanding Albertans' understanding of world languages and cultures	AEDA, ED, LEARN, IIR
• provide Alberta businesses with information/intelligence to identify emerging opportunities and enhance market access	AFRD, ED
• coordinate Alberta's participation in strategic international relationships and agreements with key trading partners	ED, IIR

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PRESERVATION . . .

Goals 14 to 19 focus on preserving the Alberta tradition of:

- a safe society where justice prevails
- a clean environment
- strong values and culture
- pride in Alberta and strength within Canada
- strong communities

GOAL 14: ALBERTA WILL BE A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE AND RAISE FAMILIES	

• protect human rights for all Albertans through the resolution of complaints made under the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*	CD
• augment existing crime prevention programs and review police recruitment and training	JUS
• enhance services for victims of crime	JUS
• expand youth justice initiatives including the *Alternative Measures Program* and *Intensive Support and Supervision Program* as alternatives to traditional justice sanctions	JUS
• improve the efficiency of the regulatory process through implementing the *Fair Trading Act*	GS
• improve traffic safety through driver education, road safety awareness and compliance	INFRA
• assist municipalities in preparing for emergencies and responding to major disasters	ENV, MA

GOAL 15: ALBERTA'S NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE SUSTAINED	
• provide clear, effective direction and guidelines for the use, management, regulation and development of Alberta's renewable and non-renewable resources	AFRD, ENV, RD
• reduce the impact of natural hazards such as fire, drought, flood and pests on people, property and resources	AFRD, ENV
• implement a long-term, environmentally-sustainable approach to agriculture and forest industry development that supports stable economic growth	AFRD, RD

GOAL 16: THE HIGH QUALITY OF ALBERTA'S ENVIRONMENT WILL BE MAINTAINED	
• ensure standards are acceptable to maintain the quality of air, land, water and ecosystems	ENV
• ensure public accountability for environmental management by clearly defining roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial governments, as well as industry	AEDA, ENV, IIR, RD
• provide predictable, consistent, and streamlined regulations for land use and resource management	AEDA, AFRD, ENV, RD
• maintain current levels of public safety, resources, conservation and environmental protection through effective environmental monitoring and enforcement programs	AFRD, ENV, RD
• reduce Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions by developing climate change policies and programs while maintaining Alberta's economic advantage	ENV

GOAL 17: ALBERTANS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY THE PROVINCE'S NATURAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES	
• support and encourage the development of arts and culture as essential characteristics in Alberta's quality of life	CD, GAMING
• preserve, protect and present Alberta's unique cultural and natural history through programs, exhibits, historic sites and museums	CD
• coordinate and support a province-wide library system and continue the development of the Alberta Public Library Electronic Network	CD, LEARN

• protect and manage Alberta's parks and natural reserves	ENV
• improve Albertans' understanding of their environment	ENV
• provide Albertans with opportunities to contribute to environmental protection and natural resource	ENV

GOAL 18: ALBERTA WILL WORK WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS AND MAINTAIN ITS STRONG POSITION IN CANADA	
• improve fiscal arrangements to ensure that federal revenues are shared fairly among the provinces	IIR, TREAS
• ensure Alberta's interests are represented and protected in key federal programs and initiatives, and interprovincial and international negotiations	IIR
• participate fully in discussions across Canada on Aboriginal self-government	IIR
• work in partnership with local governments to promote healthy and sustainable communities throughout Alberta	CD, ED, MA, GAMING
• continue to promote a strong and united Canada	all ministries

GOAL 19: THE WELL-BEING AND SELF-RELIANCE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WILL BE COMPARABLE TO THAT OF OTHER ALBERTANS	
• ***improve Aboriginal well-being and self-reliance by developing government-wide and ministry-specific strategies***	CS, HRE, IIR, JUS, RD

and reporting on results	
• ***increase Aboriginal participation in the benefits of economic development by developing government-wide and ministry-specific strategies and reporting on results***	CS, HRE, IIR, JUS, RD
• ***propose strategies to reduce the gaps and overlaps among federal, provincial and community programs, services and funding for the Aboriginal community***	CS, HRE, IIR, JUS, RD

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